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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the need for continuity of services for preschool children. The paper focuses on three topics relevant to this concept: the preschool child, the necessary services, and the need for continuity. For the purposes of this paper, continuity refers to both the continuity of development and the continuity of services. The first section of the paper reviews current knowledge of preschool children in the areas of human growth and development, learning, the role of the family, and overall societal goals for children. The next section reviews the limitations of services currently available and presents a list of desirable characteristics for services affecting children and families. The third section discusses the need for planned service systems which support continuous development throughout the life cycle. The final section of the paper presents two models for providing effective services for preschool children and their families: the existing model of State Offices of Child Development and a proposed interagency approach to comprehensive services. The paper suggests that states have the option to select the format for services which is most consistent with their interests and their policies. (BD)

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Continuity of Service to Preschoolers

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The title of this presentation, continuity of service to preschoolers, expresses an extremely advanced and sophisticated concept. This concept emerges from knowledge, policy, practice and needs about continuity, about service and about preschoolers. It also incorporates the interaction and relationship of continuity, service and preschoolers. Further, it includes values, beliefs and philosophy of various social and political groups and jurisdictions.

I know I am taking the risk of losing you completely before I even begin an examination of the topic. But I am increasingly convinced that concepts are what guide our behavior, whether that behavior is designing legislation, organizing services, or relating to other humans. The legislation, the services, the relationships are merely expressions of the concepts. I am also increasingly convinced that unless we verbalize and make overt the concepts, we have no rationale to guide us in determining social needs

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and goals, or to determining whether the procedures we choose indeed meet the needs and achieve the goals.

To clarify and make functional the concept, continuity of service to preschoolers, the presentation is organized to address the parts of the concept and then its entirety. The parts are addressed in reverse order, so that the human factor, the preschoolers, is recognized as the focal point, the service as the support for the preschoolers, and the continuity as the time factor for the preschoolers. The concept in its entirety is addressed by clarifying the relationship of the parts into a whole which becomes functional in providing services to preschool children over time. Examples and models of systems and parts of systems will illustrate ways to convert the concept into reality.

Preschoolers

What do we know about preschoolers, what do we want for them, what are we or should we be doing about them, if the concept of continuity of service to preschoolers is to be meaningful?

Over the past fifty years we have learned a great deal about preschoolers through research activities and program experiences. We have clarified some facts about human growth and development; some facts about learning;

and some facts about the ecology of the child, particularly the family. We have also a general understanding of what we want for children or, put another way, what children have a right to become.

The human growth and development facts important to understanding preschoolers are these:

a. development is continuous and sequential
b. development is dependent on interaction of the organism with the environment
c. development is the result of maturation and learning
d. changes in behavior occur as a function of time; i.e., chronological age
e. individual differences or variations include rates of change, styles of learning and behavior, responses to experience, previous behavior and development, socialization characteristics and personality configurations
f. the organism and the environment are in constant change in terms of movement in space, in terms of development, and behavior and in terms of time
g. early experiences have differential effects on later behavior.

Please note how many of these facts about human growth and development and learning include the concept of continuity: development is continuous, changes over time, early experiences affect later behavior. The fact of individual differences is primarily a guide for recognizing the uniqueness of each individual on this continuous changing yet sequentially predictable path of development and learning.

The learning facts important to understanding preschoolers are these:

a. children learn from the total environment
b. children learn differently in structured and unstructured situations
c. learning includes
   (1) acquiring concepts of permanence and order in observed change and disorder
   (2) acquiring skills for receiving, processing, and expressing as well as retaining experience
d. children learn differently from different teaching styles
e. the child's behavior is the most reliable indicator of learning
f. continuous assessment of children's behavior is necessary to determine learning
g. learning is not only cumulative in quantitative and qualitative aspects, it is also essentially different and disparate over time.

The important points to note in these learning facts is that they are continuous facts. They refer to learning at any given time as well as over time. They remain basic to any programs or services for preschoolers and have clear implications for the future of preschoolers.

The facts about the family important to understanding preschoolsers are these:

a. The family is the primary and most fundamental influence in the preschooler's development.

b. The family provides the basic learning environment for the development of the preschooler's:

(1) curiosity
(2) motor skills
(3) social skills
(4) physical health
(5) language
(6) sense of security
(7) self-esteem
(8) sense of love
(9) coping skills
(10) moral values

c. The family with a low income cannot always provide the experiences necessary for the

development of preschoolers. This family experiences a higher frequency of multiple assaults which intensify and complicate developmental problems of children on a multiplier effect.

d. Parent involvement in programs is most effective when:

(1) parents are perceived as teachers of their preschoolers

(2) the family is perceived as a system for delivering to preschoolers the stimulation and support necessary for development and learning

e. Family development is critical to child development. The significant aspects of family development are:

(1) increasing competence in coping

(2) increasing self-esteem

(3) increasing respect for the family's worth as individuals

(4) increasing confidence in the family's potential for continuous development of themselves and their children.

The important points to note in these facts about families is that families are there first in the development of children, must be involved in programs and services which address preschoolers, have a developmental thrust of their own, and are the most enduring aspect of continuity of child development.

The general understandings about the overall goals for children are these:

a. increasing care of self

b. increasing self-direction

c. increasing self-confidence

d. increasing skill in acquiring and utilizing knowledge and experience both individually and with others

e. increasing concern for others

f. increasing involvement in society

The major points to note about these goals is the time factor in achieving them, and the general movement from less to more of each goal. It should also be noted that these are goals leading to desired adult behavior.

Our knowledge about preschoolers, then, relevant for continuity of service to them, emerges from knowledge about human growth and development, learning, the role of the

family and overall societal goals. Now let's look at services.

Service

Service is a broad term with many definitions. For purposes of this presentation, service means any program or support from the community which helps in the development of children. The service may be organized under health, education, welfare, or some other administrative structure. The historical role of service has been to provide independent programs from the different administrative units. Thus, an early and periodic screening, diagnosis and treatment program provided by a welfare department is usually totally independent of a maternal and child health program provided by a health department; yet both concern the healthy development of children. These services are independent of education services, even if the latter are to provide special services to the children identified as having developmental problems in the former. Family services are independent of employment services and child care services frequently are independent of both. Services which promote development of preschoolers, particularly intervention programs, are frequently independent of other services or, in fact, provide the total services within

the intervention program. Head Start is an example of total, comprehensive services.

The historical development of service provision has lead to a number of present characteristics of service:

1. Fragmentation. This fragmentation is at all levels of government, federal, state and local and in other service organizations both public and private. The independent services through hospitals, community health, welfare and the schools is fragmented. There is no conceptual framework which guides services to look at the whole child who needs comprehensive services.
2. Single Service. Service provided by separate agencies or single purpose public and private groups, tend to provide only the services defined by the agencies or groups. Further, the focused service is usually provided by personnel who have special training to provide that particular service. Few of these trained personnel look at the whole child or the variety of needs which must be met. Preschoolers and their families must, in effect, accommodate their needs to the single service structure!

3. Limited availability. Service is frequently limited to geographic areas having the greatest concentration of resources or with the greatest political clout. Geographically isolated or impoverished localities are frequently neglected. Categorical programs which limit services to certain economic, ethnic or special category (e.g., mentally retarded or developmentally at risk) groups exclude others with equally pressing needs. The effect is discriminatory. Service must be universal.

4. Unstable and discontinuous. Service which is temporary or is responsive to political shifts cannot be counted on to exist over time. This may be good or bad, depending on the quality of the service and its usefulness for preschoolsers. But the unstable aspect of service prompts those concerned with the development of preschoolers either to try to bring about stability in service or to learn to deal with unstable services and develop a range of alternatives. In terms of discontinuous aspects of services, this

refers more to linkages between services at a specific time and such linkages over time.

5. Crisis oriented. Service tends to be unavailable to preschoolers and their families until a crisis in the family has occurred. The service may come only after the family breakdown is complete and the service is of an emergency nature. The role of prevention and correction is completely ignored by this crisis orientation; rather the service becomes available after such permanent damage is done. This is particularly true of preschoolers whose problems can be identified and corrected so that future problems can be prevented.

6. Unconcerned with the family unit. Service for preschoolers tends to disregard the family as a unit and deal only with the child - medically, educationally or socially - as an isolated individual. The importance of the family situation and background is ignored; in fact, the family ecology is not seen nor understood.

7. Inertia and in-fighting. Service frequently continues as it has for years, even when no longer relevant or useful, merely because

the status quo provides a sense of security to many people involved. The turf battles, empire building and encroachment battles are all part of an in-fighting struggle, and frequently paralyze service changes more consistent with preschoolers' needs.

The desired characteristics of service consistent with this presentation are:

1. Quality - the best possible service
2. Efficiency - eliminates overlap and duplication
3. Comprehensiveness - total range of service
4. Universality - all preschoolers and their families
5. Flexibility - responsive to individual differences
6. Continuity - coordinated and articulated

But before we look at the ways in which continuity of service to preschoolers is achieved, we need to give some attention to the concept of continuity.

Continuity

Continuity refers both to continuity of development and to continuity of support service. The continuity of development concept derives from the facts about human growth and development and learning, facts about the role of the family and facts about societal goals for children.

The continuity of support service refers to the planned structures, systems or procedures by which people are provided with experiences that foster and support continuous development. A number of assumptions, however, are implicit in the concept and should be stated. These are:

1. The home and family are the primary system for providing human services, and other efforts should complement, supplement, and support the family structure whenever possible.
2. Growth and development of human beings from conception on are gradual and continuous processes, and that too much service discontinuity can hinder that development.
3. This growth and development over time become increasingly complex and highly interdependent with goods, services, and emotional relationships from and with significant individuals, family groupings, and social institutions.
4. Each human being has a right to expect the essentials to healthy physical, emotional, and social growth and

development are available in his/her life span, from conception through aging and the dying process.

5. Thoughtful, planned, goal-oriented public and private structures and functions can not only use available financial and human resources more efficiently and effectively, they can also enhance continuity in people's lives. (Issues, 1975, p. 4)

If you are still with me, I would like to bring all of this together into a statement on some useful models for providing continuity of service to preschoolers.

Models for Providing Continuity of Services to Preschoolers

Two models are described. One is currently in operation: State Offices of Child Development (or equivalent). The other is recommended by the Southern States Work Conference: an interagency approach to comprehensive services to young children and their families. For the State OCD's model, I am drawing heavily on the outstanding work of the Education Commission of the States in Denver, Colorado and to the leadership of Dr. James Peterson. For the Interagency model, I am drawing heavily on the splendid work of the Southern States Work

Conference and the leadership of John B. Himelrick, Sr.

Both of these models approach the idea of continuity of service to preschoolers in different ways, but each is concerned with a common set of elements necessary for provided the service. The critical elements are as follows:

1. Definition of human needs and rights. The human needs are defined according to knowledge about what is necessary for continuity of development. What are the health, education, welfare, psychological and social needs of preschoolers and their families to assure continuity of development? The human rights are defined by law, custom, values and ethics.
2. Public policy decisions. Knowing the needs of preschoolers and their families does not make apparent what should be done to meet those needs. Policy decisions must be made, drawing on emperical evidence, judgment, values and preferences of community members.
3. Designation of desired outcomes. Determining what should be achieved by a continuity of service to preschoolers is a more useful

guide to allocating resources than determining inputs and assuming outcomes. Focusing on results allows for consideration of a variety of ways to achieve a given outcome. It also encourages an examination of functions of a group or agency rather than on structures and procedures which are there primarily to support the outcome. Then, too, defining the outcome provides a way of tracking or monitoring progress toward it.

4. Designation of human services. Identifying human services that can provide for continuity of service to preschoolers requires an examination of the total service system. Most needs for preschoolers cut across the way agencies are organized to provide services. And those that a comprehensive mini-system, such as Head Start, run into problems when the children leave the system.

5. Designation of human services delivery system. The way a service is delivered depends on the location of the needed service, the available resources, the configuration of needs of the preschoolers and their families, and the

preferences of a community. When new service delivery systems are being contemplated, their form should be guided by continuity considerations.

Having identified common elements in the two models, let's examine the differences.

State Offices of Child Development. These state OCD's or their equivalent, are established by legislation or executive order. Coordination of planning, budgeting and provision of services are mandated in various ways by the different states. The Education Commission of the States provided the leadership for establishing these State OCD's in 1971 and in 1972 developed alternatives for state administrative structures. The leadership provided in 1971 was summarized in the ECS report, Early Childhood Development: Alternatives for Program Implementation in the States, by the following statement:

> How early childhood programs are administered at the state level will substantially affect the impact and nature of the state effort. And one thing is clear. Coordination of state programs must be drastically improved. Continued efforts must be made to eliminiate the duplication caused by overlapping funding procedures. Both program centralization at the federal level and a means of channeling funds

> and effecting planning through a central state agency are needed...state legislation should be enacted to establish coordinating machinery for early childhood programs.

The recommended alternatives for state administrative structures were: (1) placing early childhood responsibility in an existing agency; (2) creating a new office of child development as an independent agency; or (3) establishing a child care coordinating council. The alternatives were developed further in a 1972 ECS report, Establishing A State Office of Early Childhood Development: Suggested Legislative Alternatives.

The commmon denominator and the basic function of state OCD's is to serve as a mechanism within a state to help to provide for the planning and coordination necessary for an adequate delivery of services to young children and their families. The state OCD's work with the various service agencies in trying to eliminate overlaps and duplications of services, to promote the development of new services as needed, and increasingly to look at the issue of continuity. State OCD's can act as advocates for the needs of preschoolers and their families and can engage in a number of independent activities which increase attention on preschoolers or contribute to knowledge or provide services The OCD's are

directly or indirectly involved in such activities as pilot or demonstration projects relative to young children, pertinent research and data collection, parent training, and the development of comprehensive state plans to facilitate the provision of children's services. The federal office of Child Development has provided some funds to help states efforts to increase their capacity to plan, develop and coordinate children's services, and to form state OCD's.

A serious limitation to the state OCD format is its dependence on the governor and the legislature, when these officers are affected by elections. In the fall of 1974, for example, there was a large turnover of elected officials and it became necessary for state OCD's - as well as all state agencies - to inform the newly elected officials of their purpose and functions as well as to adapt to the new political realities that confronted them.

The second model, an interagency approach, attempts to place the power of providing comprehensive services to young children and their families, into the hands of the leaders of all the agencies involved. This approach is described in a position paper which provides a guide for achieving interagency coordination. I am including the statement in this presentation because the statement is short and because it contains the critical considerations

for achieving interagency coordination: rationale, administration, programs and services, personnel, and funding.

INTRODUCTION

The Executive Committee of the Southern States Work Conference meeting at Daytona Beach, Florida in its 85th Annual Session on June 13, 1974 adopted the following position statement relating to comprehensive services to young children and their families.

The Project Committee on "Comprehensive Services to Young Children and Their Families: An Interagency Approach" prepared the paper as an introduction to a larger resource document to be issued at the completion of the Committee's work.

It is the feeling of the Executive Committee that the paper merits consideration as a statement of commitment to improved services to children and their families through increased coordination among all agencies presently involved in serving children.

RATIONALE

The Project Committee hereby expresses its commitment to improved services to children and their families through increased coordination among all agencies which provide children's services.

We believe that:

- Children are our most important resource
- The home and family are the first and most important influences in a child's life
- Every child should be provided the opportunity to develop to his maximum potential
- Prevention is better than cure
- The effectiveness of services to children is inversely proportional to the age of the child, and the cost of providing those services is directly proportional to the age of the child
- Preventable damages may become irreversible when appropriate services are not provided before age three
- In view of the scarcity of human and physical resources, economy and efficiency are imperative considerations
- Neither the children, nor the services they need, can be compartmentalized
- Individuals who work with children should be, by virtue of personal characteristics and professional preparation, eminently qualified to perform their tasks.

In order to translate these beliefs into effective programs it is imperative that those who are charged with the legal responsibility for providing needed services move aggressively to join forces with parents and other interested groups to develop programs appropriate to the needs of young children and their families. At least the following areas are in need of specific attention.

ADMINISTRATION

In order to identify and deliver services in the most effective manner and to make the most efficient use of human and financial resources, mechanisms must be developed in each state to provide for the coordinated delivery of services to young children and their families. The responsibility for planning, funding, implementing, and operating such delivery mechanisms must be shared by the leadership of all agencies involved. It is also essential that the greatest possible degree of appropriate consumer input be channeled into the planning, implementing, and evaluating processes.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Developmental programs, based upon the best research available, and adapted to meet the peculiar needs of specific children and their families should be made available to those who need them. Such programs should be comprehensive in nature and should include mental and physical health services, social services and educational services designed to provide each child the opportunity to develop to his maximum potential.

No child or his family should be denied a needed program or service because of inability to pay, geographic considerations or other such factors.

PERSONNEL

If one accepts the twin assumptions that individuals who work with children should be highly qualified through personal characteristics and professional preparation and that learning is a life-long process, then it follows that training programs, both pre and in-service in nature, should be made available for all who are involved in providing services to young children and their families.

It also follows that if programs are to be planned and administered by multiple agencies and are to be interdisciplinary in content, and if services are to be delivered through coordinated delivery systems, then training for personnel who provide such services should also reflect these characteristics.

Thus, it is the position of this Committee that training designed to improve the knowledge, understanding and skills of personnel involved in child development programs should be planned by and administered through an interagency mechanism which incorporates the greatest possible input from all agencies involved.

FUNDING

If services of the comprehensive nature mentioned in this statement are to be provided for all children and their families it is obvious that a reordering or priorities at national, state and local levels must take place.

The Committee believes that the interagency approach will accomplish maximum efficiency in services delivered. However, the savings thus effected will not be sufficient to cover the cost of providing the services needed to meet the physical, psychological and educational needs of young children. Rather, significant new resources will need to be channeled into programs for young children and their families in order to deal adequately with current unmet needs.

The two models have common goals, but use different strategies. States have options to select a format most consistent with their interests and processes.

Summary and Conclusions

Continuity of service to preschoolers can be achieved as we draw on the significant information about preschoolers and their families, as we examine the service structures and systems available and needed, and as we assume the responsibility for providing this service. The values and policies of a society will determine final decisions about providing continuity of service to preschoolers, but guidance is provided to decision makers from the available knowledge and alternative strategies. Two models are presented to illustrate alternative strategies.

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